Revolution

> In even the most peaceful states, there is something mining its way beneath the surface, and those with attentive ears can hear the dull sound made by revolutions, still buried deep beneath the earth, pushing their galleries under all the kingdoms of Europe, spreading out from the great central revolution, the crater of which is Paris.[1]
>
> - Victor Hugo, *Les Feuilles d'Automne* (1831).

The great French writer captures the sense of brooding threat that haunted Europeans in the early 1830s. The metaphor of revolutions as a subterranean endeavour by unseen people working inexorably to destroy the very foundations of the European order conveys a sense of powerlessness amongst the people on the surface above: we know that the mining is taking place, deliberately, determinedly; we can even hear it, but we do not know how to stop it. If we can push Hugo's darkly poetic imagery a little further, it goes to the very nub of the concept of 'threatened orders', for here we have revolution as 'threat', burrowing its way through the geological structure – the 'order' of nineteenth-century Europe. The concept of 'threatened orders' may add some texture to recent approaches to the study of revolution. Historians, political scientists and sociologists have of course produced general theories of revolution for close to a century. Jack Goldstone has usefully categorised the different approaches into 'generations',[2] each of which, ever since the Russian Revolution of 1917 stirred early efforts at comparative analysis, was broadly associated with one approach or another. In the past decade, a fourth generation has taken shape after Goldstone suggested that previous theories neglected the role of 'conscious agency' in revolution and the experience of revolution as 'process'.[3]

'Conscious agency' relates to the leadership, ideology and organisation of revolutionary movements, which in the study of the origins of revolution, ought to be *combined with* an assessment of the factors that provoked instability in the existing order, such as international crisis, the alienation of the élites and social conflict. Yet while all revolutions in the past have arisen from various combinations of structural problems such as these, the actual revolutionary situations which arise from them are not always created by the conscious agency of revolutionaries, but have occurred accidentally. The experiences of 1789 and (in many parts of Europe) 1848 and 1989 show that, even as the crisis took shape, the forces of opposition either did not anticipate the regime's collapse (as in 1789 and 1989), or were at pains to avoid a collision with it (as in many parts of Europe in 1848). Even where an active, explicitly revolutionary opposition did exist, it might not have been in any position to take an active part in the initial overthrow of the existing order, since it might be atomised by exile or imprisonment (the experience of the Bolshevik leadership when the Tsarist regime collapsed

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[1] Victor Hugo, *Les Feuilles d'Automne* (Paris, 1832), p. iv.
[2] *Goldstone*, Theories, 425-453.
[3] *Goldstone*, Toward a Fourth Generation, 139-187.

in Russia in February 1917) or caught off guard when the revolutionary crisis suddenly materialised. So the conscious agency of revolutionary movements may become more important once revolutions are under way, but that it is not always the prime mover in the *causation*.

Where revolutions did not arise from the conscious agency of a revolutionary opposition, then the origins of the crisis must be found in the structural weaknesses of the existing order. Yet this is not to say that we need to return entirely to structuralist explanations of the 'third generation', skilfully exemplified by the work of Theda Skocpol.[4] For even where there was no deliberate attempt to bring about revolution, or where those trying to do so were too weak to bring about a revolutionary situation, a broader opposition to the regime, or to some of its policies, will still exist, even if it is repressed. Whether it is discrete or organised, such opposition will interact with the structural problems of the regime, exerting pressure on it even when it is not hell-bent on destroying it altogether. Yet the 'fourth generation' approach does not explain how and why some of these relationships between structural problems and opposition develop into revolutionary situations. It is here that the notion of 'threatened orders' can help, because the term itself implies a dynamic relationship between 'threat' and 'order'.

All political regimes face threats, but some threats are more distant than others and some regimes are more vulnerable to threat than others. 'Threat' in this sense is like 'risk' in human activities: some risks are remote and merely 'possible', others are 'high', that is, closer and more certain. Yet the term 'threat' almost always implies more certain danger than 'risk': a 'threat', no matter how distant, is certain, at least to those who perceive it, while 'risk' is probable, no matter how high. These distinctions suggest a way of conceptualising the process by which the challenges faced by a regime converge to produce a revolutionary situation. The elements of this process are 'risk', 'threat' and 'crisis'.

'Risk' is here defined as the possibility of harm or damage in any area of human activity. For a social order, it can be internal or external. In the former case, it relates to the potential weaknesses within the system's structures and organisation, while in the latter case, risk, whether domestic or external, is defined in relationship to the activities, behaviour and aspirations of the regime. Either way, 'risk' is a probability inherent in the nature or actions of an order. A regime might also take action to minimise the 'risk' inherent in some of its activities and structures. These initiatives, which are taken not under the duress of a 'threat', but rather are voluntarily undertaken in order to prevent the 'risk' from materialising as a 'threat', might include the restructuring of authority, or the enhancement of forms of social control, such as censorship and policing, or it might involve economic initiatives to offset social distress and enhance state revenue. The reform programmes of the eighteenth-century 'enlightened absolutists', which were in no small part a series of responses to the high risks (and often active threats) of the brutally competitive international order, might fall into this category, as might the programme of economic restructuring and political reform undertaken in the Russian Empire by Tsar Alexander II (1855-1881) and in the Soviet Union by Mikhail

[4] *Skocpol*, States and Social Revolutions.

Gorbachev (1985-1991).[5] As the examples of 'enlightened absolutism' and the Russia's 'great reforms' in the nineteenth-century show, such efforts to minimise risk or to prevent them from evolving into threats can offset the dangers of internal social and political upheaval – at least in the short to medium term – but they can also raise hopes for more far-reaching change within progressive sections of civil society. When these expectations are not met, then some disillusioned groups might resort to more radical methods of securing social and political change: the Italian *Giacobinismo* of the 1790s drew some of its recruits from officials and intellectuals who were bitterly disappointed when the tide of enlightened reform in the Italian states was blunted or reversed, particularly in the face of both popular and elite resistance and in reaction to the French Revolution.[6] Alexander II's 'great reforms' did not prevent the emergence of revolutionary movements which wanted more far-reaching change and one of which was ultimately responsible for the Tsar's assassination in 1881. And the experience of Perestroika and Glasnost show that addressing inherent risks through reform might actually transform them into 'threats', or help foster new 'threats', that destabilize and even topple the existing order.

Such 'threats' can be internal, structural, external, or contingent and include both the activities of the political opposition and the responses of the regime to them. 'Threat' can be defined 'passively', as an 'anticipation of impending danger', but of course it can also be 'active', whereby actors deliberately undertake to 'impose a sanction on another'.[7] In the context of political violence, such as riot, rebellion, coup d'état and revolution, the 'anticipation' of threat depends upon the perceptions of those who feel challenged by it, even if those behind it mean to pose no actual danger. 'Anticipation' of threat, whether real or imagined, encourages preparatory measures on the part of the order being challenged and such responses can have a variety of effects, ranging from the suppression or resolution of the threat to the precise opposite, namely to ratchet up the 'threat' itself. 'Active' threats, in the context of social or political upheaval, might be undertaken by actors who seek to challenge an existing order, but they can also be environmental, arising from circumstances such as natural disasters, crop failures, disease and famine, or contingent, by which is here meant a sudden change in external circumstances – such as a realignment in international relations - which is not intended to challenge a particular social or political order, but which effectively intensifies the risks that they already face. Both environmental and contingent forms of threat are external to an order, are beyond its direct control, but exert new pressure upon it, intensifying the risks that it faces. A revolutionary situation arises when both 'risks' and 'threats' coalesce with such force that both the order and its opponents perceive that their options for legal or non-coercive action have been severely reduced. In these circumstances, the 'risks' themselves can be intensified into 'active threats' – in other words, cease to be a probability and become an imminent, internal danger to the order. The 'anticipatory' definition of 'threat' has considerable explanatory power in cases of revolution where the opposition has no desire or intention to collide violently with the authorities, still less to destroy the existing order. In 1789 and in many places in 1848 and 1989, the reaction of the

[5] *Eklof, Bushnell, Zakharova*, Great Reforms; *McCauley*, Gorbachev.
[6] *Woolf*, Italy, 147-151.
[7] *Cohen*, Threat Perception, 93.

authorities was shaped by their own anxieties that a more serious danger lurked within the demands for reform, or that concessions would so alter the structures of authority that the regime itself would be irreparably compromised. Regimes may inadvertently precipitate a revolutionary situation, so creating the very threat that they had feared all along.

Thus the utility of the notion of 'risk' and 'threat' in analysing the development of revolutionary situations is that they set the opposition, whether revolutionary or otherwise, into a wider matrix of causation. All regimes face an interlocking variety of 'risk' at all times, but it is the emergence of 'active' and/or 'anticipatory' threats that can transform that 'risk' into a revolutionary situation: in other words, the 'crisis'. 'Crisis' is here applied as it was generally understood since 1780 to mean 'a new sense of time that both indicated and intensified the end of an epoch'.[8] In a revolutionary context, the word 'intensified' is the critical one: for the 'crisis' in the development of a revolutionary situation is the confluence of the various strands of 'threat' and 'risk' facing an order at one point in time, provoking a hiatus in political and legal authority, out of which the long-term pressures and challenges are resolved, although not without major structural changes and sometimes terrible human costs.

The concepts of 'risk', 'threat' and 'crisis' raise the question as to *what* is being threatened. In identifying the groups or structures under attack in revolutionary situations, both contemporaries and later analysts have used such terms as 'order' (as in 'established order', 'old order', 'conservative order'), 'regime' (the *Ancien Régime*, the 'Tsarist Regime'), and 'system'. Indeed, in the cut-and-thrust of revolutionary politics (as in the passions of later academic debate), the terms are often used inter-changeably. Yet the interest of the term 'order' lies in the range of its possible applications. 'Order' can mean the personal and collective security of citizens and the state, ('law and order'); it can apply to a particular social group ('estate') differentiated from other 'orders' through its corporate identity, status and privileges ('a society of orders'). Yet it can also apply to the entire political organisation of a state, or to the whole structure of a society. The nature and scope of 'order' are important in revolutionary contexts, since they are defined in a close, if hostile, relationship with the effects of the revolutionary transformation. The revolutionaries themselves usually define which aspects of the 'old order' they want to reform or change, but – it cannot be emphasised enough – those who take power after the initial revolutionary crisis may lose control of the pace, scale or target of the change. In other words, the nature and scope *both* of the threat and of the order being attacked is frequently fluid in the circumstances of revolution. This adversarial relationship not only defines the scale and type of 'order' under assault, but it also defines the scope and nature of the revolution itself, namely, its transformative intentions and effects. This lends support to Goldstone's argument that combining structural origins, revolutionary agency and the results of revolution means analysing revolution as a *process*.[9] So when the concept of 'threatened orders' is applied to 'revolution', it defines 'revolution' as a process in which 'risk' and 'threat' combine to produce a crisis, out of which the existing 'order' is transformed.

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[8] *Koselleck*, Crisis, 358.
[9] *Goldstone*, Toward a Fourth Generation, 173-174.

Such a definition of 'revolution' contradicts the idea that revolution is 'simply a form of governmental change through violence', or 'simply the change by physical force by citizens of those in power over them'.[10] These conceptualisations of revolution cover any violent political upheaval that results in a change in the political leadership of a state, such as the assassination of an individual leader and military coups d'état. In this view, the defining feature of revolution is the *violence* in the actual *transfer* of power. Yet the definition proposed in this present chapter sees a broader structural change in the political or social system as an essential component. Revolutions are crises in which risk and threat coalesce and find their resolution in the transformation of the existing order itself. Violence is not the central or indeed necessary part of this definition. Instead, the moment of transfer of power is merely the pivotal point – which usually becomes the symbolic one - in the longer revolutionary process.

All definitions of 'revolution' will ultimately be subjective. Most people think they know a revolution when they see one – whether experiencing it directly on the streets of (say) Cairo in 2011 or Bucharest in 1989, or studying instances of upheaval in the more distant past – but the definition outlined above draws its evidence primarily from the experiences of the French Revolution of 1789 and the European Revolutions of 1848 and 1989. The rest of this chapter will therefore outline how this model of revolution applies in each case, looking in turn at 'risk' and how 'threat' coalesces with it to produce a revolutionary 'crisis' followed by 'transformation'. The most detailed analysis will focus on 1789 (the author's main area of expertise) and progressively lighten as the comparison moves forward in time through 1848 and 1989: it is hoped that the pattern of the argument should be clear enough by the time the last example is considered.

The Ancien Régime in eighteenth century France faced several structural risks. Firstly, there was population growth (from 21.6 million to 28.6 million between 1715 and 1789), which put intensifying pressure on an economy that had oases of dynamism within the broader expanse of a sluggish agrarian economy. Although French agriculture did grow to feed the burgeoning population, pressure on the land, combined with taxation and seigneurial rights and dues ensured that, at best, improvements standards of living were regionally patchy and remained static for the majority of the French population.[11] Secondly, as Theda Skocpol and Bailey Stone have argued,[12] the Bourbon monarchy aspired to be both an imperial as well as a continental power: the risk inherent in this ambition was that it far outstripped the means of achieving them. The limitations lay less in the uneven structures of the economy and more in the inability of the government to tap French sources of wealth fully. This was because of the third risk inherent in the structures of the old order: the entrenched limitations of the administrative system and the innate resistance of privileged groups to reform, a resistance that took institutional shape within the church, the provinces, guilds and corporations, estates and the thirteen sovereign courts – the *parlements*. There were also grave structural problems in the ways in which the monarchy collected its revenue, in a system that was effectively run

[10] *Calvert*, Revolution, 2-3.
[11] *Jones*, Great Nation, 351.
[12] *Skocpol*, States and Social Revolutions, 60-64; *Stone*, Genesis.

for private profit and in which offices were bought and sold.[13] There was also a fourth risk, which lay in the dangers of alienating the wider 'public', the very concept of which had, by the mid-eighteenth century, taken on political meaning. 'Public opinion' had come to be regarded as the ultimate source of comment, direction and legitimacy in politics, passing judgement over kings and ministers. When the opposition to the crown arose, it had done so originally in defence of privilege, but by the second half of the eighteenth century it was also deploying a rhetoric and ideology that came to rest on notions such as 'reason', 'justice', 'will, 'patriotism', 'nation', 'liberty', 'citizen', 'public opinion', 'virtue' and their nemeses, 'despotism' and 'privilege'.[14] Yet, serious though these four 'risks' were, it was not until the 1780s that exogenous developments converted them into more direct 'threats' to the old order. Remedial action by the absolute monarchy, ranging from an all-out assault on the *parlements* in 1771-74, which was intended to be prelude to a wider assault on the Gordian Knot of administrative and fiscal 'risk',[15] to a system of censorship that was applied erratically,[16] certainly provoked a public response that was almost always hostile, sometimes furious, but which appears to have given the monarchy itself the benefit of the doubt, even as it criticised the specific abuses of 'despotism' which were aimed less at the King himself than at his ministers. Only with the blithe historians' benefit – or perhaps hindrance - of hindsight is it possible to see in the oppositional rhetoric emanating from France's critical public the early manifestations of the transformative ideology of the Revolution itself. The question to be answered, then, is how the 'risk' inherent in public opinion was transformed into a 'threat' by 1789.

In Europe prior to 1848, the essential components of risk included, firstly, the demographic pressure of a growing population (at least in western and much of central Europe), without the commensurate economic development to feed and employ it, for while there were certainly economically-dynamic regions, growth was fitful at best.[17] Secondly, this was overlaid by a conservative political order which proved to be too rigid to accommodate the pressures of social change and the continuing development of civil society.[18] A prime example is provided by the Habsburg Empire under Metternich's whip hand, which did not have anything like the global aspirations of Ancien Regime France. Yet its aims were none the less expansive enough to put strain on the administrative and social structures of the monarchy. Metternich sought to preserve the international order forged at the Congress of Vienna in 1815, serving the dual purpose of protecting the multinational empire from the potentially centrifugal forces of a major European conflict, while also empowering Austria in the suppression of revolutionary movements within its Central European sphere of influence. Yet the costs of supporting both aims – which demanded a strong military – was intense: military expenditure amounted to 40 per cent of the state budget between 1815 and 1848, which when combined with the cost of the imperial debt – paying the interest alone cost the government 30 per cent of its revenue annually – left the regime with little room for financial

[13] *Doyle*, Origins, 64-65; *Bosher*, French Finances; *Doyle*, Venality.
[14] *Linton*, Intellectual Origins, 153.
[15] *Jones*, Great Nation, 278-288.
[16] *Chartier*, Origines Culturelles, 75-78.
[17] *Lyons*, Post-Revolutionary Europe, 180-184, 190-192.
[18] *Schroeder*, Transformation, 803.

manoeuvre when a crisis arose. This problem did not arise, moreover, merely from government expenditure, but also, as in France prior to 1789, from the shortcomings of the administrative order. Metternich certainly aspired to greater efficiency in administration and revenue-raising, while there was some reordering at the centre, the overhaul did not reach much further. Where the imperial government exerted itself in seeking more taxation, it ran headlong into elite resistance, as in France.[19] Most important here was the Magyar nobility, without whose co-operation the regime could do little in the vast, eastern portion of its empire.[20]

Yet across Europe in 1848, as in France in 1789, it was not just the elites who were engaged critically with the conservative order, but also an ever-expanding public. The very existence of a literate, cultured, sociable public, which was especially broad in northern Europe, France and Germany, ensured was a disjuncture between, on the one hand, the educated and critical population, and, on the other hand, regimes that were either based on a narrow social basis, like the constitutional monarchy in France, or claimed to rule with absolute power, as in Austria and Prussia.[21] A similar dysfunction arose in the Arab states prior to 2011: a well-educated demographic 'bulge' of young, urban people faced shocking rates of unemployment, had ready access to news, discussion and debate across the world, but all while bearing the stifling weight of authoritarian regimes.[22] In both Europe before 1848 and the Middle East on the eve of 2011, censorship was imposed almost everywhere (albeit to varying degrees), which made the regimes appear to be both oppressive and unresponsive to the aspirations of the educated, politically-engaged public.

The very nature of the old order in Europe after 1815 - its claims to absolute monarchy or to a narrow basis of parliamentary rule, its hostility to all but the most anodyne of political reforms, its denial of national aspirations and its stringent responses to the 'social question' of poverty were logical and necessary responses from a conservative perspective, whose outlook was coloured by the experience of decades of war and revolutionary change between 1789 and 1815. The limitations of the old order were ways of managing the risks inherent in an international order that had known a generation of conflict and radical institutional change, and of containing the revolutionary risks embedded in the growth of civil society and the fitful, painful structural changes within European society. Yet the very existence of an explicitly revolutionary opposition in many of the European countries – from the *Carbonari* and *Charbonnerie* of the immediate post-1815 generation, to, subsequently, elements of the republican, socialist *Réforme* tendency and the proto-communist cells of Auguste Blanqui in France and Giuseppe Mazzini's Young Italy - shows that these attempts to minimize the 'risks' could also create an active 'threat' to the conservative order, one which could and did directly assail it through the conspiracies and insurrections that punctuated the period between 1815 and 1848. Yet the significance of the revolutionary opposition lay less in the threat that it posed on its own – since that proved to be containable if not eradicable for most of this period – but rather that it articulated, albeit in the most radical way, a wider malaise

[19] *Sked*, Habsburg Empire, 8-37.
[20] *Deak*, Lawful Revolution, 15-16.
[21] *Lyons*, Post-Revolutionary Europe, 126-127.
[22] *Bowen*, Arab Uprisings, 5-6; *Mason*, Why It's Kicking Off, 66.

within a civil society that bristled against the restrictions of the old order but none the less mostly preferred to see change enacted through reform and transition rather than a violent collision with the regime. Such changes, most opponents hoped, would arise through the pressure of public opinion, a process that the Piedmontese liberal Massimo d'Azeglio, rejecting the conspiratorial tactics of Young Italy, called 'a conspiracy in broad daylight'.[23] The question again arises, therefore, as to how the 'risk' inherent in public opinion at large could coalesce with the small but active revolutionary 'threat' to produce a much greater 'threat' in the revolutionary crisis of 1848.

In Eastern Europe prior to 1989, the two most important risks were political and economic. The political risk was the divergence between the purported aims of the Communist regimes – social justice, equality of opportunity and individual freedom – and the harsh realities of totalitarian rule. This, of course, was most obvious in the treatment of open opposition, ranging from the crushing of the East German insurrection in 1953, the Hungarian revolution of 1956, the Prague Spring of 1968 and the reaction to Solidarity in 1980-81, but also in the arrests and harassment of dissidents: Václav Havel and the Charter 77 movement in Czechoslovakia, the Solidarity trade union in Poland, peace and church groups in East Germany and the Ecoglasnost environmental movement in Bulgaria. On top of this, there was the pressure to conform, sometimes low-key and implicit, but sometimes punitive and overt, and enforced by an apparatus of secret policing and informants: as the British historian and journalist, Timothy Garton Ash, discovered for himself when, after 1989, he got sight of his own personal file held by the Stasi.[24] The economic risks were structural. The industrialised and technologically-advanced Eastern European economies prior to 1989 were not impoverished by global standards. The socialist regimes may even have been sincere in their desire to ensure full employment and low prices for their citizens. Yet attempts to tame market forces, or to exclude them altogether meant that the supply and prices of goods and services were determined not by consumer demand, but by administrative fiat. This system did produce muscular industrial economies producing heavy, capital goods and military hardware, but more widely the economies responded to the political concerns of the governments rather than the desires or needs of consumers. Moreover, since the economies were resistant to international market pressures, they also began to lag behind the more developed capitalist economies in technological terms.[25]

These risks inherent within the system seem obvious with hindsight, but it was certainly not clear to contemporaries that they might transform into an active series of threats to the Communist order. The rapid economic growth that was experienced across Europe between the 1950s until the early 1970s ran at a faster pace (at an impressive average of 4.9 per cent a year between 1970 and 1975) in the East than it did in the West. Meanwhile, the fate of the popular mobilizations in 1953, 1956, 1968 and 1981 seemed to have shown that 'people power' could not mount an effective threat to the Communist order, or even to challenge it to

[23] *Lyons*, Post-Revolutionary Europe, 114.
[24] See, for example, the revealing, personal case study of *Garton Ash*, The File.
[25] *Chiriot*, What happened?, 20-24; *Kornai*, Socialist System.

reform itself into a 'socialism with a human face'.[26] This led dissidents to seek other ways of living under the regimes without actually engaging with them, including what the Hungarian academic, intellectual and *samizdat* writer Konrád György called 'Antipolitics', the act of expelling the state from one's sense of morality and conduct.[27]

In all these cases – 1789, 1848 and 1989 - the revolutionary crisis was produced by a change either in the risks themselves or in external circumstances, which converted the combinations of risk into a 'threat' to the existing order. In the case of France in 1789, this move to 'threat' arose when a political decision intensified two of the risks: the danger of overreach in foreign policy and the limits of the monarchy's fiscal and administrative structures. The decision was that of intervening in the American War of Independence in 1778. The mounting of the risks was not immediately obvious, since militarily, the war was a triumph and, by 1783, the monarchy appeared to be basking in the glow of public acclaim after it had – at last – defeated the old British enemy. During a post-war visit to Cherbourg in 1786, Louis XVI was hailed by the crowds who flocked to see him: he was, it was said, so very different from the 'despots' who 'hide in the depths of their palaces'.[28] So the victorious French state seemed to have overridden the risk of both foreign policy over-stretch, while securing the support of French public opinion. Yet it had, in fact, exacerbated the risk inherent in the creaking fiscal and administrative system into a 'threat'. Although it was not immediately obvious to royal officials, the financial costs of the American War had brought the monarchy close to bankruptcy by 1786: it had torn catastrophically wider the chasm between the state's imperial aspirations and the resources at its disposal. The ship of state, in effect, was sailing perilously close to the threat of bankruptcy.[29] When Louis XVI and his ministers at last were confronted by the stark financial realities in 1786, they were determined to embark on a programme of reforms to reverse what was now a danger so urgent that it was no longer a risk, but a threat to the capacity of the monarchy to pursue its goals, perhaps even to survive unaltered. Yet the question was what sort of reforms there should be and how far they should go. It was this issue, debated furiously over the next three years, that so aroused French public opinion that it, too, morphed from a grumbling risk into a direct threat to the old order.

The French involvement in the American War of Independence certainly strengthened the monarchy's patriotic credentials with public opinion, but the American Revolution's emancipating rhetoric and its constitutional experiments had also intensified public interest in the possibilities of enlightened reform. Yet from 1786, the urgent efforts by the crown to reform fell far short of the kinds of political changes aspired to by French progressive opinion, fascinated as it was by the parliamentary systems in Britain and America and envious of the liberties that they offered. Instead, the raft of fiscal and administrative reforms proposed by the government rebounded on the regime because they seemed merely to bolster royal 'despotism'.[30] It was the combination of the 'risk' from the union of public opinion

[26] *Mazower*, Dark Continent, 367-369.
[27] *György*, Antipolitics.
[28] *Merrick*, Body Politics, 18.
[29] *Doyle*, Origins, 44.
[30] *Doyle*, Oxford History, 80-82.

behind the opposition of the elites to the monarchy's policies and the looming 'threat' of bankruptcy up to September 1788, that combined to build towards the revolutionary 'crisis'.

After an acrimonious and sometimes violent struggle between the King and the elites, represented by the *parlements* and two successive Assemblies of Notables, the friction between the monarchy and public opinion certainly became more heated, even combustible, but the monarchy still might have prevented the financial and political threats from developing into a full-blown revolutionary crisis. In August 1788, it yielded to public demands by summoning the Estates-General. At the same time, the royal treasury was forced to suspend payments. The absolute monarchy appeared to be well and truly on the brink of collapse, both politically and financially, but even now the concession of the Estates might have retrieved the situation, not least because it was an opportunity to harness public opinion to the King and to his policies for fiscal and administrative reform. The chance passed, however, when another fateful decision was made, taken on 25 September not by the King, but the *parlement* of Paris.

It was now that the risk from public opinion and the threat inherent in the state's structures began to coalesce into a revolutionary crisis. When the *parlement* declared that the Estates should meet in such a way as to ensure that the voice of the privileged orders (the clergy and nobility) would prevail over that of the Third Estate, the opposition split between those who supported the former and those, the 'patriots', who backed the rights of the latter. It was at this point that the deepening risks within what was already a strident public opinion became an 'active threat' to the Ancien Régime itself, because the struggle suddenly became one not just of opposition to the 'despotism' of ministerial power, but also to the wider framework of privilege – a point given further weight by the content of the lists of grievances, the *cahiers de doléances* – that were drawn up during the elections to the Estates-General and which complained about various forms of privilege down to the most localised level.[31]

This attack on privilege posed an 'active threat' to the entire legal order of the Ancien Régime, since the whole social hierarchy was based on it. The threat was all the more severe because, when the Estates-General gathered in May 1789, the King threw his support behind the claims of the privileged orders, which was not only a dramatic political realignment, but also raised the stakes in the struggle. For with the opposition to privilege given a strong legal, institutional presence in the shape of the Third Estate delegates (who called themselves the 'National Assembly' from 17 June), political gridlock was virtually guaranteed. This made the government's chances of pushing its own reform programme through close to zero without some kind of confrontation, even a coup. The 'royal session' of 23 June 1789, where Louis announced his political programme and issued a veiled threat that he would press on by himself if the Estates did not yield, was intended to grasp this thistle - in union with the privileged orders *against* the pressure from the Third Estate, or National Assembly.[32] Meanwhile, the structural risk inherent in the economy was intensifying: the disastrous harvest of 1788 and shocking levels of unemployment were causing social distress and anger

[31] *Markoff/Shapiro*, Revolutionary Demands, 258-260.
[32] *Price*, French Monarchy, 66.

amongst people being pressed into indigence and facing the real possibility of them famine. There were food riots in the towns and the countryside through the winter of 1788-89 and into the spring. At first, such outbursts of economically-motivated violence did not in themselves threaten the established order, since they aimed at securing a decent supply of food, but their nature was gradually transforming into an assault on the Ancien Regime in the countryside, with refusals to pay tithes, seigneurial dues and to recognise manorial rights. This grumbling opposition – a developing, 'active' threat arising from the economic crisis – would leap a full-blown revolutionary assault on the rural old regime with the electrifying news of the uprising in Paris on 12-14 July.

Thus by the summer of 1789 the elements of risk had been or were being transformed into threats, which coalesced to produce the revolutionary crisis. Yet how this arose came from the ways in which all sides perceived the nature of the 'threats' levelled against them – and they were almost entirely 'passive' or 'anticipatory' rather than 'active'. In fact, the demarcation between the two kinds of threat was all-too-often hazy, which was precisely why the level of threat felt so compelling to all involved. The monarchy moved troops into Paris and Versailles. This was, for one, in response to the threat of a public that seemed increasingly restive – and indeed on 23 June the Palace at Versailles had almost been invaded by a crowd inflamed by the political passions of the moment. Yet the soldiers could clearly also be used against the Estates to break the political deadlock and restore royal authority. Thus the government certainly responded to the anticipatory threat of an insurrection, but may well have been posing an active threat to the 'patriotic' movement as a whole. This was certainly how the public, in both Paris and Versailles saw it, not least because half of the 30,000-strong force that had converged on Paris by 4 July, were foreign mercenaries believed to more likely to follow orders…and to fire on the people.[33]

At the same time, the bread price was approaching its peak, intensifying what was a severe economic 'risk' of famine into a perceived political 'threat', since Parisians resorted to the customary eighteenth-century fear that the scarcity of food was the product of an 'aristocratic' conspiracy to starve the 'patriots' into submission.[34] Thus a combination of threats – active and anticipatory – produced a highly combustible crisis. The tipping point into revolutionary violence came when the popular finance minister, Jacques Necker, was dismissed on 11 July: although the King's precise motives are open to debate,[35] the appointment in his place of the martinet, the Baron de Breteuil, seemed to herald a turn towards strong, determined government aimed in some way at re-imposing royal authority at the expense of the Estates-General. When news of Necker's departure reached Paris on 12 July, it was certainly received as a prelude to a coup against the Estates, while the capital would be subjected to a deliberate policy of starvation – since Necker had been credited with trying to keep the city supplied with bread – while also reduced by a military assault.[36] When a protest march violently collided with royal cavalry on the Place Louis XV and in the adjacent Tuileries gardens that evening, the insurrection was triggered. It culminated in the

[33] *Godechot*, Bastille, 160.
[34] *Godechot*, Bastille, 170-171.
[35] *Andress*, 1789, 284; *Price*, French Monarchy, 71-75.
[36] *Andress*, 1789, 286.

storming of the Bastille on 14 July and Louis XVI's recognition that initiative had fallen to the National Assembly on 16-17 July. The great irony appears to be that the initial orders given to the commander of the royal troops in Paris were purely defensive: there appears to have been nothing in them preparing them for a repressive assault on Paris or on the Estates-General.[37]

Thus, if one gives the monarchy the benefit of the doubt on this point, then one interpretation of the revolutionary crisis in 12-14 July 1789 might be that the royal ministry's response to an 'anticipatory' or 'passive' threat of insurrection created a sense 'anticipatory' threat amongst the Parisians, whose countervailing reaction was the insurrection that finally pushed over the teetering edifice of the absolute monarchy. If this was indeed the scenario, then the 'passive threat' perceived by the ministry ultimately produced the very real insurrection that it had feared all along. If, on the other hand, the monarchy's intention *was* to unleash a coup against its rebellious subjects, then its response to an 'anticipatory' threat was to 'actively' threaten Paris, a reaction that equally produced the insurrection that it had dreaded. Finally, the reaction of the peasantry to the news of the revolution in Paris also illustrates the role of 'threat' in provoking revolutionary violence. The countryside was already facing the real, 'active' threat of economic distress, the 'risk' of famine and the 'anticipatory' threat of the 'aristocratic plot' – expressed in the rural panic remembered as the 'Great Fear'.[38] Now the news came after 14 July that the old order was collapsing at the centre and this converted the fundamentally economic protests into something more decisive – an 'active threat' against the very fabric of the old order in the countryside, in the shape of the peasant insurrection against seigneurialism. It was this uprising that pushed the National Assembly into abolishing 'feudalism' and privilege in the tumultuous night of 4 August 1789, virtually eradicating, in a legal sense at least, the Ancien Régime.[39]

In the case of Europe in 1848 the 'risk' carried by the demographic pressure intensified into a 'threat' during Europe's worst economic downturn of the nineteenth century, which exposed the limitations of the conservative order. Tax revenues dried up, borrowing became costlier and the value of government bonds tumbled at the very moment that the regimes needed money to intervene in the economic crisis and to confront the political opposition that was energised by it. On a landscape traversed by hunger marches, punctuated by food riots and huddled with the unemployed, the liberal opposition to the old order saw their chance to press for political change. So the 'risks' inherent in the expansion of civil society and in the state's policing of public opinion deepened. Yet the opposition that arose from this did not initially pose an 'active threat' to the conservative order until 1848 itself. While there were, of course, revolutionaries at work, they did not provoke the revolutionary crisis or tip the crisis into violence, but rather seized the opportunities as they arose. In only one place – Galicia in 1846 – was there an attempt at revolution, but the Polish nobles who led this uprising against Habsburg rule were butchered by the Ukrainian peasantry, who remained loyal to the

[37] *Price*, French Monarchy, 76-77.
[38] *Lefebvre*, Great Fear.
[39] *Fitzsimmons*, Old Regime Ended.

Emperor.[40] Elsewhere, the opposition movements and protests that gathered pace during these desperate years hoped to secure a measure of reform, rather than to force a change of regime altogether. In other words, they posed 'risks', not 'active threats' to the conservative order.

France saw a wave of reform banquets, where the republicans pressed for an extension of the suffrage – not an overthrow of the July monarchy altogether. In Austrian-ruled northern Italy (Lombardy and Venetia), the opposition initially engaged in what it explicitly called the *lotta legale* – a legal struggle – for constitutional reforms and for the employment of more Italians in the upper reaches of administration: it was a call for *trasformiso* rather than a radical change of regime. In Germany, liberals pressed for reforms in the constitutional states of the south, while in Prussia King Frederick William IV gave liberal demands for constitutional government a legal, nationwide platform in the United Diet that met in 1847. In Austria, liberals gathered in the reading and cultural societies to discuss what news they could and discuss the possibilities of a constitutional order, while in Hungary the Magyar opposition flexing its parliamentary muscles in the Diet at Bratislava. The imperial court, now starved of revenues in the economic crisis, was compelled to summon the Estates of Lower Austria in Vienna. So as 1848 opened in a flat, brooding dawn, the risks inherent in the population pressure and fitful economic growth and the limits to the regimes' revenue-raising capacity had certainly intensified into an 'active threat' to the existing order, provoking restiveness and social protest everywhere – including the hunger marches in Germany. The other great risk, namely the disjuncture between Europe's critical publics and the ruling regimes, was certainly and suddenly intensifying, but it had not yet been transformed – quite - into an 'active threat' to the very survival of the conservative order, because while many of its participants may have *hoped* for the overthrow of the order and even anticipated – with some dread – a social upheaval, fewer actually *wanted* to see a revolution unleashed in all its violent, unpredictable force.

Yet the situation was certainly on a knife-edge: the economic threat and the political risks were coalescing, but what turned this into a revolutionary crisis was the response of governments to the challenge, which in most places read the situation, not unreasonably, as a direct threat. Thus, most regimes reacted to an 'anticipatory' or 'passive' threat. In fairness, it should be said that the governments were not just being paranoid: they were conditioned by the historical memory of revolutions in 1789, 1820 and 1830, and there were indeed revolutionary movements at work, even if most officials exaggerated their size and effectiveness. Yet it was their anticipatory responses to the perceived threat that actually produced the revolutionary situations and, ultimately triggered the revolutions almost everywhere. First of all, these responses involved trying to close down public discussion, or at least to limit the legal scope for opposition and protest: in Paris, for example, the monarchy tried to ban the reform banquet planned to be held at the Panthéon on 22 February. In Berlin, the permanent committee of the United Landtag, the focal point for public expectations of change, was dismissed by the King on 6 March. Secondly, many regimes prepared for the anticipated threat by bringing troops onto the streets to confront the possibility of insurrection

[40] *Kieniewicz*, Polish Peasantry, 113-126.

(as in Paris, Vienna, Prague, Berlin and Venice) or to suppress riots (as in Milan). Yet they usually provided the accidental circumstances which tipped the revolutionary situation into violence in late February and March.

Yet responses to an 'antipatory threat' created the circumstances in which the revolutionary crisis brewed. The organisers of the protests and petitions demanding political change certainly wanted to secure it through peaceful reform, with agreement and concessions from 'above' not a revolution from below. Only in some rare instances – as in Palermo on 13 January - was an insurrection deliberately unleashed.[41] In Paris, right up to the very eve of the demonstrations in Paris that would be tipped into the revolutionary crisis on 22 February 1848, even the republican radicals of *La Réforme* agreed that there would be no collision with the authorities and that, at the first show of force by the government, the crowd would peacefully disperse.[42] In Bratislava, even the firebrand Lajos Kossuth's thunderous speech to the Hungarian Diet on 3 March, which C. A. Macartney calls 'the inaugural address of the revolution' certainly demanded Hungarian autonomy, but within the Habsburg empire, and for far-reaching reforms. While Kossuth certainly warned that the monarchy 'must choose between its own welfare and the preservation of a rotten system', neither he, nor his rapt audience, envisaged the wildfire of revolutions that would engulf the empire within days.[43] In Vienna on 13 March, the crowds who assembled outside the Estates of Lower Austria to await the response to their petition for parliamentary government, civil liberties and for Austrian support for reform of the German Bund.[44] In Berlin, the crowds who gathered outside the royal palace on 18 March massed to hear a proclamation announcing King Frederick William IV's concessions to his subjects. In Milan, the opposition chose the Austrians' own appointee, Gabriel Casati, the *podestà*, or mayor, to lead the march on 18 March to the governor's palace to demand the creation of a civic guard and civil liberties. In a meeting of opposition leaders prior to the demonstration, both the monarchists and the republicans alike agreed that the protest would be peaceful.

Yet, no matter how moderate the demands of the opposition were, no matter how peaceful the intentions of its leadership were, the regime's responses to the 'anticipatory threats' had already created a situation that was highly combustible, as soldiers and civilians jostled and jibed with each other. In these circumstances, the peaceful protests and petitions could not but present an 'active threat' to the regime. This is because the friction between the order and the opposition was already such that, regardless of the intentions to avoid a collision, the slightest accident could tip the crisis into revolutionary violence. In Paris, it was the fusillade on the Rue des Capucines on 23 February; in Vienna, the violence erupted when marchers jostled with troops blocking the way to the Hofburg, the imperial palace, on 13 March; in Berlin on 18 March, the bloodshed began when cavalry tried to clear the square in front of the royal palace; in Milan, the pitched battles of the 'Five Days' also exploded on 18 March, when Marshal Joseph Radetzky's forces moved in to retrieve the governor, Heinrich O'Donnell, who had been taken hostage as 'surety' for the reforms that he had promised.

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[41] *Mack Smith*, Sicily, 415-418.
[42] *Rapport*, 1848.
[43] *Macartney*, Habsburg Empire, 323.
[44] *Rath*, Viennese Revolution, 43-44.

Yet in all these cases, it was only when the violence had been unleashed and the barricades were thrown up that, where they existed, the genuinely revolutionary organisations either seized the opportunity to fight for more far-reaching change. In Paris, it was overnight on 23 February that the radical leaders of the *Réforme* tendency began to garner the support of the insurgents for a republic. In Milan, Mazzini was only able to join the revolution after it had begun, when he scurried to the city from his Swiss exile. Thus in most cases in 1848, the reaction of regimes to a 'passive threat' inherent in the political opposition helped to create the combustible, revolutionary situation in which even the peaceful demands of the opposition were transformed into an 'active threat'. This response may have been understandable, since governments were also confronting an active economic 'threat' which was already putting severe strain on the means at their disposal to deal with the social crisis. Yet the friction was such that the regimes had put themselves into a situation where they were faced with the unenviable dilemma of either making concessions to the opposition or resisting them with a show of force. Either way, the coalescence of social and political threats, active and anticipatory, had created a crisis from which the conservative order could not emerge unaltered unless it triumphed militarily in the street-fighting - and nowhere did this happen in these early months of 1848. The result was that, for a few months, the conservative order was overthrown, or at least altered enough, to give liberals the unprecedented opportunity to reshape European politics, if not society.

In Europe in 1989, the risks faced by the totalitarian regimes of Eastern Europe coalesced into threats for three reasons. Firstly, the global economic crisis of the mid-1970s slowed down growth dramatically, which intensified the risks inherent in the systems of Communist Europe. While capitalist economies responded with a restructuring that was traumatic, but which eventually promoted prosperity (for a couple of decades at least), the Communist economies began to stagnate.[45] One impetus for *détente* with the West in the 1970s was an attempt by the Communist world to respond to the economic downturn by engaging with capitalist, market-orientated economies. This included raising loans in the West in order to purchase new technology, while using exports to repay the debt, but the borrowing and the exports did not balance.[46] In some countries, such as Poland and Hungary, such loans were used to purchase consumer goods, but as the debts mounted, so it became increasingly harder for governments to subsidise food prices. The grafting, queuing mass of the population were now given daily reminders of the divergence between the rhetoric and the realities of the totalitarian systems[47] The legitimacy of the Communist regimes rapidly corroded, since they were unable to deliver the social well-being that was their very *raison d'être*. Although no one was faced with starvation – a prospect that was very real in 1789 and 1848 for many people - the economic woes first became a 'threat' to the order in precisely one of those countries where the international debts were almost crushing: Poland. Solidarity had been founded in 1978, but it was in 1980 that its 'occupation strike' of the Lenin Shipyard in Gdańsk propelled it and Lech Wałęsa to global attention.

[45] *Sebastyen*, Revolution , 16-17.
[46] *Tyson*, Debt Crisis, 63-110.
[47] *Mazower*, Dark Continent, 373; *Chiriot*, What happened?, 25-26.

'Solidarity' was an 'active threat' to the Communist regime, even if its initial intentions were not to overthrow the regime. In offering (like the Catholic Church in Poland) an alternative to the state as a source of action, in developing a programme that, thanks to the regime's crackdown on its activities in 1980-81, could not help but be 'against' the regime, Solidarity sapped the legitimacy of the Communist order in Poland even as the economic threat did the same. Yet the gradual breakdown of Communist authority that ensued in the nine-year battle between Solidarity and the regime (General Wojciech Jaruzelski called it a 'state of war') almost sent the country into a spiral of economic and political collapse. Significantly, by the later 1980s, the situation had encouraged a wave of strikes that not even Solidarity could control, which appeared to threaten the country with civil war – a threat that, on both sides, may have been 'anticipatory' but which was certainly a grave and very real 'risk'.[48] This was the second major development that intensified the risks elsewhere in Eastern Europe. For the other governments, the danger was that countries with serious economic problems – especially Hungary – might follow in Poland's wake. For most of the 1980s, this was a 'risk', albeit a serious one. What transformed it into a 'threat' was the third change, which was external: the withdrawal of the Soviet Union. This arose for a convergence of reasons, including the fierce competition with the United States and NATO in the arms race (and the 'Star Wars' programme); the bleeding ulcer of the war in Afghanistan; the political shockwaves from the environmental catastrophe of the Chernobyl meltdown; and a desire amongst the leadership to see Perestroika, the market-orientated reforms in the Soviet Union, work. In these circumstances the protracted political conflict in Poland threatened to jeopardize Gorbachev's reforms, which would almost certainly have been derailed by the economic and political consequences of the Red Army invading to restore 'order' in Poland. This is one reason for the Soviet decision not to intervene there or anywhere else in Eastern Europe.[49] This proved to be an active 'threat' to the Communist regimes outside the Soviet Union in 1989 because they could no longer rely on Soviet military assistance – as they could in 1953, 1956 and 1968 - when they were confronting opposition from their own people. Moreover, the examples of Perestroika and Glasnost in the Soviet Union could not help but raise the question and indeed expectation of reform in other Communist countries.

Thus by 1989 threats and risks were coalescing to produce the revolutionary situations in Eastern Europe: by now the cocktail included the 'anticipatory' threat of a total breakdown of order in Poland, the continuing, deepening 'risks' from the economic travails of the Communist order elsewhere, the 'threat' stemming from Soviet withdrawal and the 'risks' associated with the example of Gorbachev's own reforms. 1989's equivalent of the convoking of the Estates-General were the 'round table' talks in February 1989 in Warsaw, when the Jaruzelski regime, severely bruised from confrontations with both Solidarity and hard line Communists, entered into formal negotiations with the trade union movement. The upshot was that there was an election on 4 June which was scarcely free, but which represented a triumph for Solidarity. Although this was achieved without violence, it was the moment that revolutionary situations began to develop elsewhere. Ultimately, the individual revolutionary situations that developed in the last months of 1989 came from a combination

[48] *Mazower*, Dark Continent,
[49] *Chiriot*, What happened?, 31.

of ‘active’ and ‘passive’ threats. Without Soviet military support, most of the Communist leadership in other European countries were uncertain of their ability to control the situation in their own countries, so the responses to the ‘anticipatory threats’ took an unusual diversity of forms, including an internal government coup against the leadership (against Erich Honecker in East Germany, for example, in October and Todor Zhivkov in Bulgaria in November); a desperate scramble to make concessions and share power (as had happened in Poland and which were attempted belatedly and in vain in Czechoslovakia); or the use of force, from the brutality of the police in Prague to the murderous violence of the Romanian Securitate in Timişoara and Bucharest. The ‘active’ threat to the Communist order took the shape of the waves of ‘people power’. These, in turn, had gathered strength from the risks that had long been simmered in the failure of Communist economic policies and in the alienation of dissidents and publics. These risks now coalesced into the ‘active threats’ of the wave of protests that swept the Communist states. These included, firstly, the thousands of East Germans who had been ‘holidaying’ in Hungary, who refused to return home and so compelled the opening of the Hungarian frontier on 10-11 September; secondly, the popular protests in East Germany that culminated in the fall of the Berlin Wall in the night of 9-10 November; thirdly, the mass demonstrations in Prague during the ‘Velvet Revolution’ in Czechoslovakia on 20-24 November; and, fourthly, insurrection in Romania against Nicolae Ceauşescu on 21-25 December. The social and political risks within the totalitarian regimes of Eastern Europe had thus been intensified by economic stagnation, the strategic withdrawal of the Soviet Union and the long-running struggle by Solidarity to coalesce with the threats of political opposition and an internal loss of confidence to produce the revolutionary crises in the autumn of 1989.

After each of these revolutions – 1789, 1848 and 1989 – there followed social, political and cultural transformations, but their nature and extent are invariably sources of debate and controversy: as Richard Cobb once remarked (with characteristic iconoclasm): ‘the French Revolution should never have happened, possibly never did happen, and in any case had no effect one way or the other on most people’s lives’.[50] Scepticism about the lasting effects of revolution arises partly because their impact is often only felt in the long run. As I write this, for example, the political effects of the Arab Awakening have yet to run their course and indeed in the central cases of Syria and Egypt, the revolutionary upheavals have yet to come to an end. Moreover, Western and Middle Eastern observers alike are concerned that the Arab Revolutions will ultimately produce hotbeds of religious radicalism and, as such, be centres of conflict rather than stable democracies, which also show that the transformative effects of revolution are open to debate. We see similar, longer-term controversies in the revolutions considered here: did 1789 signify democracy and the ‘Rights of Man’ or the proto-totalitarian regime of the Terror and the guillotine? Was 1848 the ‘Springtime of Peoples’ or a step on the road to the murderous nationalism of the twentieth century? Should 1989 be celebrated as a transformation from totalitarianism to democracy, or be more cautiously regarded as the opening of a Pandora’s box out of which slithered atavistic, barbarous forms of ethnic nationalism?

[50] *Kumar*, Revolutionary Idea, 177.

It is also easier to perceive and analyse some of the legal transformations that took place – the introduction of constitutions, new systems of law, welfare reforms, overhauls of the armed forces, but much harder to measure changes in social structure and the cultural impact. In the French case, there can be little doubt that the revolution enacted a profound structural transformation in the French state, social institutions and the values that underpinned both. Even if, as Alexis de Tocqueville famously argued, the centralisation and uniformity of the state was an achievement that the Ancien Régime itself had long pursued, it is hard to see how the destruction of privilege, the creation of the departments and the forging of a political order based on civil and legal (though not political or social) equality could have been achieved in the way it did without the crisis of 1789. Moreover, the radicalism of the changes affected social and cultural institutions such as the Church, the law, the welfare system and education – and these changes were underpinned by an ideology and rhetoric that placed the nation and equality of rights at the centre of the new civic order. The transformative impact of the 1848 Revolutions is more controversial still, not least because they are usually held to have 'failed', yet the abolition of serfdom in Central Europe, the introduction of constitutions in some key European states (namely Prussia and Piedmont), the entry of new social layers into politics and the awakening of national and social movements had lasting effects on the continent. The Revolutions of 1989 created liberal democracies in Eastern Europe, turned the countries over to the tender mercies of the market economy, enabled the expansion of the European Union and NATO and hastened the collapse of the Soviet Union.

If transformation is an essential, defining characteristic of revolution, then this raises the fundamental question of its role in 'modernity'. Events of the last decade suggest that revolution is far from moribund as a political phenomenon. The early 2000s saw the 'Colour Revolutions' in the former Soviet republics of Georgia (2003), the Ukraine (2004) and Kyrgyzstan (2005), to which might be added the Serbian revolution of 2000. Revolutionary – or potentially revolutionary - outbreaks have continued to appear across the world, with the anti-government protests in Myanmar in 2007, the 'Twitter' revolution in Moldova and protests in Iran in 2009. Most dramatically of all, of course, there has been the 'Arab Awakening' in 2011. Revolution as a symptom of modernity partly arises from the technologies involved. In 2011, mobile phones and laptops plugging into social media (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Flickr) were used not only to mobilize protests, but also to outflank the forces of order and to broadcast the events to a global audience. As Paul Mason has argued, such technology gave the protesters both practical and a psychological advantage: 'a cool cutting-edge identity in the face of what Auden once called "the elderly rubbish dictators talk". It makes the protests 'seem entirely congruent with the way people live their lives. It is modern; it is immune to charges of "resisting progress".'[51] Yet this could equally apply to each of the older revolutionary cases, in which political ideas and messages were debated, honed and disseminated using the most recent forms of communication and media. In France around 1789, the printed word and image, painting, music, theatre, opera, processions and festivals were all enlisted. By 1848, printing became cheaper and faster with

[51] *Mason*, Why It's Kicking Off, 76.

the invention of the steam press and people and ideas were propelled across the continent by steam-power in the shape of the locomotive and steamship. In 1989, radio and television made it impossible for Communist regimes to police public opinion and it certainly hastened the formation of protests in East Germany and Romania at crucial moments.[52]

Yet communications count for little if they do not intersect with the structures of civil society – in other words, with the forms of sociability in which ideas are discussed and opinions formed. This was a long-term development that ran through all the revolutions cited here, from 1789 to 2011. Civil society arose from the interplay of the 'consumer revolution' of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, an expansion of literacy, of educational opportunities, wider access to the printed word and a mushrooming of forms of cultural life independent of both church and state. While the organs of civil society can be used for both progressive and conservative purposes, it none the less remains a social and cultural space in which individuals and groups can access new ideas, think about and discuss them and, sometimes, use them to challenge established values and assumptions. It was the role of civil society – or, if one prefers, 'people power' in its organised or networked forms - that places revolutions within the process of 'modernity'. It is perhaps no accident that the earliest political upheavals that took the recognisably revolutionary course of risk-threat-crisis-transformation arose where civil society also first took an early, recognisable shape – in the Netherlands and Britain in the seventeenth century. Max Weber defined the rather elastic concept of 'modernization' as a process whereby 'rationality' supplants traditional values, ways of life and belief in a range of ways, including the rise of capitalism and new forms of social discipline, the growth of the bureaucratic state, the emergence of systems of law and the application of scientific knowledge.[53] He was concerned that such a process would create a stifling uniformity and an overbearing state. Yet modern revolutions are the opposite of this process. They are moments in which, even if for a fleeting period of time, the state loses its legitimacy, leaving the initiative to the structures of civil society. The process need not be violent to be revolutionary, but it is this mobilization of the public, and the sudden opening of new opportunities for civil society to act, that connects revolutions to modernity.

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